

Trustees take closer look at \$409 million school plan

By DENNIS SMITH

Special to The Champion

Trustees did some soul searching about public school accommodation Wednesday and quietly agreed something must be done.

Halton District School Board members were examining the reasoning behind the C.N. Watson \$409 million capital strategic plan at this week's meeting.

A consultant's representative recapped the basis for the plan's proposals, which include building 41 new schools and closing 15 others over 20 years.

Trustees will consider approving the plan April 19 and were asked Wednesday to outline goals for school accommodation.

"Let's try and determine what our mission is and have a unique statement of purpose," said Education Director Dusty Papke. "The plan has achieved its four objectives but, in the final form, the plan may not be what we want."

Trustees came up with several core values they don't want compromised.

This list included providing quality programs, student safety, building schools in each community where students and popu-

"Every community deserves a school. Every area of growth has become a community."

DEBBIE MARKLEW

lation warrant, obtaining community input and properly maintaining buildings.

Secondary values were also established, which mean desired situations that cannot be achieved every time.

Some of these included providing transportation within the funding envelope, minimizing construction, minimizing use of portables, having sufficient administration and staff for all schools and equitable access to programs.

The board is considering the capital plan to accommodate growth in north Burlington and Oakville, plus Milton and Halton Hills. However, it must eliminate an accommodation surplus of approximately 4,200 spaces to trigger Provincial funding for new schools.

"Can we do nothing in the given situation? Is the status quo acceptable?" Mr. Papke asked. "The status quo would mean waiting until enrollment growth eliminates the surplus."

There was consensus among the seven trustees present that something had to be done about school accommodation.

Trustees also agreed to examine several individual situations. Most will be discussed at the board's next meeting slated for tomorrow at 7 p.m. at M.M. Robinson High School in Burlington.

Trustees wondered about the impact of 850 spaces being removed recently from the board's accommodation surplus.

Education Ministry officials removed (de-rated) E.C. Drury's 759 pupil places because it leases space. A few elementary classrooms were also removed.

Changes could bring cash flow and Provincial grants to the board earlier, but Mr. Papke said an analysis would have to be made to determine the exact impact.

Oakville trustee Debbie Marklew wasn't pleased some communities have schools and others don't. "Every community deserves a school. Every area of growth has become a community."

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